DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 542 CE 058 888

AUTHOR Edelson, Paul J.
TITLE Transitions: Research on the Success of Newer Deans and Directors of Continuing Education.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 15p.; Excerpts from this paper were presented at the Annual Conference of the National University Continuing Education Association (Miami, FL, April 20-23, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; Administrator Characteristics; Administrator Education; Administrator Effectiveness; Administrator Qualifications; *Administrator Role; *Career Change; College Administration; College Programs; *Continuing Education; *Deans; Education Work Relationship; Entry Workers; Higher Education; Job Skills; Occupational Mobility; Promotion (Occupational); *Work Attitudes

ABSTRACT

During the period 1990-1991, a study was conducted of 13 deans and directors of continuing education who were in the first 3 years of their new positions. This group of newer deans and directors included some who were promoted to the position for the first time as well as those who had transferred from one deanship/directorship to another. The study identified factors that led to "easier" and "harder" transitions to the dean's or director's position and also how aspects of the job of leading a continuing education unit appear to change over time. The main determining factors for transitions seemed to be a familiarity with and understanding of the institution, experience in the director's role, and the value placed on continuing education at that institution. Directors having an "easier" transition had knowledge of the institutions, experience in the director's role, and were working in institutions in which continuing education was respected. The "outsiders," deans who were brought in from other institutions, were more experienced, had a broader sense of strategy, greater self-confidence, a stronger commitment to continuing education, and higher perceptions of support from the instituion than those who had been promoted. The paper recommends follow-up research at a later date to see if the "newness" advantage of the "outsiders" had worn off after 3 years. (11 references) (Author/KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED336542

TRANSITIONS: RESEARCH ON THE SUCCESS OF NEWER DEANS AND DIRECTORS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Dr. Paul J. Edelson, Dean

School of Continuing Education

State University of New York at Stony Brook

Stony Brook, NY 11794-4310

(516) 632-7052

Excerpts from this paper were presented at the Annual Conference of the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA) in Miami, Florida, April 20-23, 1991.

The author wishes to acknowledge the encouragement and support of NUCEA Region II who provided partial funding for this study.

CE 057 222

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P Edelson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TRANSITIONS: RESEARCH ON THE SUCCESS OF NEWER DEANS AND DIRECTORS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Abstract

During the period of 1990-1991 a study was conducted of thirteen deans and directors of continuing education who were in the first three years of their new positions. This group of newer deans and directors included some who were promoted to the position for the first time and also those that had transferred from one deanship/directorship to another. The study identified factors that led to "easier" and "harder" transitions to the dean's/director's position and also how aspects of the job of leading a continuing education unit appear to change over time.

Introduction

Sooner and possibly later, again, deans and directors of continuing education may have more than one opportunity to be new on the job. The growth of continuing higher education characterized by institutions adding or upgrading their adult education programs and the desire for change by present position incumbents create opportunities for those seeking senior leadership positions for the first time as well as for those already deans and directors who willingly embrace a new transition on either a second or third occasion.

The thrust of our field has emphasized, if not extolled, this professional mobility to the director's job; it is an occupational goal that many people strive for and structure their careers about. Accordingly, professional development activities stress acquiring

and perfecting the managerial skills demonstrated by experienced deans and directors. But what about newer deans and directors? Are the circumstances of "newness" so distinct that they require both a special mindset and skills? Moreover, how do you approach the directorship if you have just been selected and take charge of your new role? How does the variable of "time on the job" operate in how we gain expertise? (We all subscribe in some measure to the belief that "practice makes perfect." Well, does it?) What about promotions from within- what are the constraints and opportunities inherent in that situation?

It seemed that a research project examining this subject of newer deans and directors would be valuable for those aspiring to these positions, not to mention others in the midst of new job mastery. The project also raises questions about the interplay between individuals and their institutional cultures, specifically on how we adjust and lose our "newness."

Related Studies

Within the continuing education literature there are articles describing aspects of what deans and directors do and a look at competencies and skills they should have (see Eppley, 1980; Gessner, 1987, 1988; Griggs and Morgan, 1988; and Marksbury, 1987). These studies often reflect the observations of seasoned professionals who are overly represented in the literature. Additionally, it is not surprising to find the more experienced administrators writing for and speaking to (at conferences) the less experienced. The net effect, nonetheless, is to overlook, ignore, and perhaps even

delegitimize what newer directors' experiences, somehow making their problems less authentic and deserving of scholarly attention. An initial attempt by the author to rectify this imbalance resulted in two case studies used in the Harvard MLE Program (see Young, 1987).

Researchers looking at the world of business have been quicker to isolate and analyze factors associated with being new on the job. Mintzberg analyzed the job patterns of new administrators and identified the "new job pattern" (Mintzberg, 1973, pp. 124-125). These new managers initially lacked contacts within the organization that would enable them to play effective spokesperson roles. Therefore they needed to enhance their contacts through extensive liaison behavior including spending more time with their superiors. Mintzberg also observed that lacking adequate internal sources of information, newcomers were more sensitive to external sources of information which sometimes provided them with a more defined sense of what, in the organization, should be improved. The new managers were also desirous of putting their own personal stamp on their organizations.

More recently John Gabarro (1987) focussed on the challenges faced by newer corporate Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) during their first three years on the job and directly stimulated this present study of continuing education executives.

Gabarro found that new senior executives introduced more innovations during their first three years on the job than at any other time in their corporate careers. He hypothesized that the new CEO's had used up all their good ideas by the end of that initial period of

"newness". This research on newer deans suggests a different and perhaps more provocative answer for continuing education deans and directors that is related to the cumulative impact of institutional cultures.

Methodology

The sample was composed of thirteen deans and directors of continuing education. All, with one exception who supervised a department of continuing professional education (CPE), were the senior continuing education managers at their campuses. All were in their jobs for less than three years. They were drawn from community colleges, four year colleges, and universities and included both public and private institutions.

The study was conducted in two phases. In Part I, the more exploratory stage, factors which might help to explain why some deans/directors had either "easier" or "harder" transitions were identified. Part II looks more closely at the "insider"/ "outsider" dichotomy to see how that single dimension alters perspective.

Findings

In Part I four deans/directors participated. One from public and three from private institutions. These included one community college dean, two private college directors, one CPE director within a larger evening school operation at a private university.

All had prior administrative experience with adults and with forms of adult education, although not necessarily within a school or division of continuing education

Assessing Transitions to the Directorship

Of the group, one dean had changed institutions but not job titles. He had moved from a deanship in continuing education at one community college to the identical position at another. Additionally, prior to his first deanship, he had also served as an associate dean of continuing education at a third community college in the same state system. His transition was the smoothest within the sample. Although he expected "much more" collegiality among his fellow community college deans, the contextual circumstances were close to what he had experienced beforehand. Clearly, he had an excellent idea of community college continuing education and was able to lead his staff confidently towards clearly defined goals.

A second participant in the study had also been a director of continuing education before taking her current job as director of the CPE university unit. However, this had been at a junior college. In addition there had been a one year stint as a development director at a specialized, non-collegiate educational institution, in the intervening period. Due to the differences in institutions, and in scope of responsibility, the transition could not be viewed as a simple continuation of directorships. Although the director was now in a higher status institution academically (Clark, 1987), she was not the senior continuing education officer for the entire university, a position held at the junior college.

This was a difficult transition marked by stress and conflict. Initial impressions of the work environment were incorrect; CPE was not a respected activity, staff

turnover was a constant problem, space for programs was inadequate, the physical plant needed repair, and there was great pressure to have the unit succeed financially.

The third director had been promoted to the head of continuing education from another job, which he had held for three years within the same college as director of a part-time evening MBA program. Previously he had been a counselor within a different component of that college, giving him seven years of institutional experience. This, like the first example, was a relatively smooth transition. The director knew many of the campus administrators and had also worked with a comparable population of part-time evening adult students while directing the business program. He was following in a campus tradition of recruiting administrators from within the college, cycling them through continuing education, which had served as a training ground for other administrators at the school. Continuing education was viewed as a respected, mainstream, component of the college.

Although the fourth director of continuing education was also located within a private college, her experiences were very different and her transition much more complex. She had been a program director at a university branch campus for a year after spending an equal period as a continuing education program coordinator and nine years in admissions. Her new position represented a promotion. Yet, of the four heads in this group, she had the least executive experience in continuing education. Moreover, her status as someone new to the institution placed her at a disadvantage in dealing with problems, including a

negative history of her unit which contributed to the lack of support for continuing education on campus.

Taken as a whole, the transitions and initial experiences for these four directors could be divided into two subgroups- "easier" and "harder". The main determining factors seemed to be a familiarity and understanding of the institution, experience in the director's role, or one of comparable complexity, and the place of continuing education at that institution.

The knowledge of the institution provided a basic framework for the new director's expectations allowing for the calibration of his or her own behavior with that of others. A greater sense of realism at the outset can minimize wasted energy, since less time is spent trying to discover the nature of the institutional terrain. Yet each director, even those lacking prior institutional knowledge, eventually came to grips with their environments and achieved success in aspects of their work.

The new directors having an "easier" transition were working in environments where continuing education had already earned a respected, if not substantial, place. They were able to develop incremental strategies for growth capitalizing on past accomplishments rather than having to rethink and develop major strategic plans for their divisions.

For those having a "harder" time, continuing education at their campuses was a threatened enterprise, of questionable value, predating their arrival. This additional historical baggage complicated planning activities and also contributed to feelings of

depression and anxiety these directors experienced.

Part II

This subgroup of nine consisted of five former dean/directors and four that had been promoted to the deanship/directorship from other positions within their institutions. Of this latter group, two had prior experience in their school's continuing education operation and two were summer session directors.

Findings

Major differences were found in how the former deans and directors approached their positions compared with those who had been promoted from within.

Level of analysis. The more experienced group could assess their possible actions against a backdrop of prior experiences at other institutions. This led to more nuanced interpretations and a more refined, if not broader sense of strategy. They were more likely to have wrestled with similar problems or circumstances and knew what response was called for in the new environment.

Self-confidence. The more experienced group exuded confidence in how they approached their responsibilities. Moreover, they seemed "born again," enjoying this second opportunity to be "new" on the job and to savor the limelight that temporarily goes with being recently appointed to a high level campus office.

Commitment to continuing education. The group of prior deans had spent enough of their professional lives in

continuing education to see this career choice as an inextricable part of their identities. Barring unforeseen circumstances they did not anticipate leaving the field.

Perceptions of support within the institution. This group compared with those lacking prior experience were more likely to perceive stronger institutional support for continuing education. In fact, the "outsiders" had a much more positive overall impression of their campuses than "insiders" (see Table 1, Appendix A). They scored higher on "support for continuing education on campus," "support by key academic leaders." They were also more likely to perceive their campuses as being better run, as having higher quality continuing education staffs, and even in having a greater availability of potential students for continuing education programs.

Clearly a positive coloration was projected on their institutions by these new deans and directors who had come from outside. Conversely, "insiders," having no-prior experience as deans/directors, seemed to be more aware of limitations and diminished internal support for continuing education at their campuses.

Conclusions

This study (Parts I & II) demonstrated that the transitions of deans and directors of continuing education to their new institutions were influenced by two major classes of phenomena. The first, relating to the background and experiences of the incumbents, provided a significant experiential base from which they were able to cope with the myriad demands of their

jobs. Prior, relevant experience, in a comparable institution, and at a similar rank seemed to presage a positive, easier, transition experience.

Yet, aspects of campus culture specifically relating to the place and value of continuing education provided an overall contextual condition that operated on several levels. First, a negative prior history of continuing education was an invisible "ghost" haunting the activities of some new directors, "outsiders" and "insiders," as they were trying to initially establish themselves as leaders. Furthermore, based upon this sample, those promoted from within seemed to be unusually susceptible to the downside of this lowered status for continuing education that newcomers may be likely to overlook, at least initially.

One is obviously tempted to ask what happens over time? Do perceptions change? Do dean/director "outsiders" become "insiders" and accordingly adjust their perceptions of continuing education negatively?

Earlier we reported Gabarro's assertion that after three years in a new job, managers use up their "newness," that is their capacity for having fresh ideas. Perhaps the newness that is actually lost after several years on the job is more attitudinal and is related to how we perceive our environment and its capacity for change. This has profound implications for feelings of self confidence and our ability to transcend limitations in our work.

It may be that deans and directors who move to new positions are able to regain, at least temporarily, this "newness" that is inevitably lost over time. A

recognition that revitalization can come from deliberate job mobility may help us perceive our careers more flexibly and less wedded to any "ideal" deanship. Simply put, such jobs may never exist. Clearly there is a need for some longitudinal analysis that will continue to track these new deans and directors over time, charting further changes in their perceptions.

It must be pointed out that there is no implicit value judgment underlying this research suggesting that a smooth transition is preferable to one that is rough, even though an easier transition might minimize stress and discomfort for the incumbent. Conversely, there is much to be said on behalf of the non-traditional job candidate, the final selection that is different, who does not exactly fit into a predetermined slot. This individual, by questioning established procedures and assumptions, can present an opportunity for the institution to move forward in unexpected ways, into uncharted areas.

Although the research identifies the psychological and personal price of what may appear to be non-fit, some new directors may be willing to risk a measure of alienation for the sake of putting into practice, at an early point, their ideals and goals. These directors can make dramatic and beneficial impact on institutions, helping them to overcome insularity. Accordingly, there is need for follow-up research, over a longer period time, on these participants in order to provide a more complex assessment of their strategies and achievements.

References

Clark, B. (1987). The academic life. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Edelson, P.J. (1989). The dean of continuing education: A diplomatic model. Journal of continuing higher education 39 (2), 29-33.

Edelson, P.J. (1990) Campus cultures and continuing education: Discovering relationships. Continuing higher education review, 54(1), 35-42.

Eppley, T.A. (1980) Professional qualifications and job responsibilities of directors of continuing education as viewed by present directors and college and university presidents. Ed.D. diss., Memphis State University.

Gabarro, J.J. (1987) The dynamics of taking charge. Boston: Harvard Business School.

Gessner, Q.H. (1987) Deaning, or how to swim with sharks. Journal of continuing higher education 35(3), 5-7.

Gessner, Q.H. (1988) The politics of continuing higher education. Continuing higher education review 52(2), 67-77.

Griggs, K. and Morgan, S.D. (1988) What are the administrative tasks and priorities for continuing education administrators? Journal of continuing higher education 36(2), 6-10.

Marksbury, R. (1987) Marginal dwellers: A positive role for continuing education. Journal of continuing higher education 35(2), 2-4.

Mintzberg, H. (1973) The nature of managerial work. New York: Harper and Row.

Young, J.M. (1987) Fairhaven university cases "A" and "B". Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for the Management of Lifelong Education, Harvard University.

Appendix A

Table 1

A Comparison of Perceptions Between Deans and Directors of Continuing Education who were Recruited from Other Institutions ("Outsiders") and Those Recruited from Within ("Insiders")

	Mean Scores*	
	Outsiders	Insiders
Perceptions of:		
Support for continuing education on campus	7.8	5.5
Support by key academic leaders	8.8	4.8
Existence of a strong tradition of continuing education on campus	7.8	4
Well managed campus	9	7.5
Quality of continuing education staff	9.6	8.8
Availability of students for continuing education programs	9.2	8.3

* Scores could range from 10 (high) to 1 (low).